

August 16, 2010

Dear District Administrator:

On June 2, I adopted the Common Core State Standards as Wisconsin's new standards for English language arts and mathematics. The Common Core State Standards hold the promise to improve the achievement of Wisconsin's students and better prepare them for ongoing education, careers, and effective citizenship. Implementation will require the concerted effort first and foremost of Wisconsin's teachers and supported through the collaboration of the Department of Public Instruction, all staff in local school districts, Cooperative Educational Service Agencies, Wisconsin's colleges and universities, professional organizations, parents, and communities. In the past three years, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) convened teams and engaged stakeholders to analyze Wisconsin's standards and the Common Core State Standards, providing thoughtful input on standards and their implementation. This letter outlines implications for local implementation of Wisconsin's new standards for English language arts and mathematics for all students.

Connections with Wisconsin's education initiatives:

- The Common Core State Standards provide an opportunity to examine and improve the education system to make every child a graduate.
(<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/everychild.html>)
- Changes to curriculum, assessment, and instruction generated by the Common Core State Standards should be undertaken as a means to implement a multi-level system of support that emphasizes high quality instructional practices, continuous review of student progress, and collaboration. (Response to Intervention or RtI:
<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/rti/index.html>)
- The Common Core State Standards provide the opportunity to improve access to academic content for all students including instruction which incorporates appropriate supports and accommodations to meet the unique needs of English language learners and students with disabilities.

Implications for State Assessment:

- State assessments are based on state standards. As we transition to the Next Generation Assessment System announced last fall, DPI will develop an assessment system built around the Common Core so that standards and assessment are wholly aligned to one another.
- Wisconsin is a governing state within the 31-state consortium called the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). The SBAC was formed in response to the Race to the Top assessment grant application, which called for the development of a next generation assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The guiding principles of SBAC mirror the recommendations of Wisconsin's Next Generation Assessment Task Force report (www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/ngatf.html).

- The timeline for development of this new assessment system has been outlined in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium application.
(<http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER>)
- The assessment system is to include a summative assessment with multiple opportunities to test, an optional benchmark assessment to monitor progress throughout the school year, and formative strategies that provide immediate instructional feedback to both student and teacher.
- The development of this assessment system will likely occur from 2010 through 2014, to be in place in the 2014-15 school year at the earliest.
- Piloting and field testing of the summative assessment will occur prior to the projected implementation in the school year of 2014-15.
- The WKCE will be administered in the fall of 2010 and will continue to fulfill federal assessment and accountability requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The state is exploring all possible options for the interim to facilitate a smooth transition to the new assessment system in 2014-15.

DPI Support for District Implementation:

- Districts are encouraged to begin now the process of connecting curriculum, instruction and local assessments to the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics. Working on this transition now will result in students being fully prepared when the assessment system is operational, and will ensure students are college and career-ready.
- The plan for implementation of Wisconsin's new standards and assessment system is being developed as a coordinated effort between the Department of Public Instruction and local districts, professional organizations, Wisconsin's colleges and universities, CESAs, and other states with details rolled out during the 2010-2011 school year.
- DPI will continue to partner with state professional organizations to help districts analyze and align their current curricula and instructional units to the new state standards, which will be the basis for the new assessment.
- Implementation involves helping educators not only understand the standards, but also to ensure classroom environments in which every student experiences effective instruction, with formative feedback and is supported in reaching high standards.
- Focusing on student learning through the development of purposeful assessment (formative, benchmark, and summative) will continue to inform instructional practice.
- DPI is planning to develop resources that will support Wisconsin school districts as they move forward in aligning the new standards with district curricula.

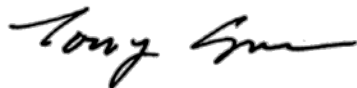
Literacy Across the Content Areas:

- One element of the new English language arts standards is a section of "Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects."
- The goal is that all educators across all subject areas and grade levels will identify their role to ensure the development of literacy.

- If students are to be college and career ready, they must develop the sophisticated literacy skills unique to each content area.
- All academic disciplines use specialized vocabulary, unique ways to present information, particular styles, and distinguishing graphics and symbols.
- With support from content area teachers who embed literacy instruction unique to their content, students maximize learning and develop discipline-based literacy skills.

Please lead the discussion in your district to effectively implement Wisconsin's new standards in English language arts and mathematics. DPI will continue to provide updates on our website, including links to the Common Core State Standards (www.dpi.wi.gov/standards) and information on transition plans for assessment (www.dpi.wi.gov/oea). Through our collaboration, successful implementation will lead to improved student achievement so that every child graduates high school ready to take on the roles and responsibilities required in the 21st century. Thank you for joining in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Evers".

Tony Evers, PhD
State Superintendent

Attachments:

- Proclamation of State Superintendent
- Press Release
- Q & A (Updated July 30)